



VA Capitol Health Care Network VISN 5 CARES Update



May 2003

What is CARES?

Simply stated, CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) is a realignment study to objectively evaluate the best ways to provide high-quality health care services to more veterans in more locations during the next 20 years.

VA needed a new way to address projected changes in veteran population—their locations and medical needs—and to continue to bring VA's health care system into the 21st century. CARES will help VA to be a better steward of its assets, make better use of existing space and realign resources to better meet the needs of veterans. At the completion of this year, the CARES databases will supplement the Strategic Planning Process and will expand into the future.

What is the current status of CARES?

We are now in step six of the nine-step CARES process – CARES Commission Review of Market Plans. In late November, Planning Initiatives for the three markets within the VA Capitol Health Care Network (VISN 5) were identified as part of step three of the CARES process. Planning Initiatives are the gaps between the services we provide now and the projected services we will need to provide through 2022. These Planning Initiatives are not decisions; they simply identify gaps between what we currently have and what we will need through 2022. Some of the major gaps identified in VISN 5 include: inpatient demand and outpatient demand, including subspecialty areas. During step four of the CARES process, each facility in VISN 5 developed draft Market Plans to address the gaps for the three markets and to demonstrate how the Network will meet the projected needs for the future. After the draft Market Plans were developed, each facility held briefings with their stakeholders (i.e. patients, employees, unions, veterans service organizations and congressional representatives) to collect their comments and input for consideration when finalizing the plan. Once the draft Market Plans were finalized, they were sent to the Network Office for a final review and approval. The draft Market Plans for VISN 5 were submitted to VA Central Office on April 15, 2003. In step five of the CARES process, the Under Secretary for Health conducted a review and evaluation of the draft Market Plans that were submitted by each of the 21 Networks throughout the country. After being reviewed and evaluated by the Under Secretary for Health, the draft National CARES Plan was forward to the CARES Commission for their review. Following the review process of the CARES Commission, the draft National CARES Plan will be forward to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in step 7 for final review and approval prior to implementation.

What is included in the draft Market Plans for VISN 5?

Network Level CARES Initiatives and Proximity Issues

The planning initiative analysis reveals that veterans within VISN 5 do not have an access to care problem; planning initiative gaps were not identified in the areas of inpatient medicine or inpatient surgery, and the Network did not have to contend with the small facility issue. VISN 5 maintains 9 long-term care spinal cord injury (SCI) beds. If long-term care SCI workload exceeds capacity, we will provide appropriate treatment by contracting for services. We will continue to provide primary care and long-term care services for VISN special population patients. Existing referral processes with VISN 1 will be used to support acute care needs for blind rehabilitation patients, and referrals to VISN 6 will be used to furnish acute care for SCI patients.

Our Network vacant space requirements will be primarily addressed through the Fort Howard Mission Change and Enhanced Use project. In excess of 305,000 antiquated square feet of space has been vacated. The Enhanced Use project at Fort Howard will create a long-term care community that will revitalize this campus. Special rates will be reserved for veterans and their spouses, and our veterans will receive a continuum of extended care options. The Enhanced Use Request For Proposals (RFP) was released on March 27, 2003.

A proximity planning initiative analysis was accomplished between the Baltimore division of the VA Maryland Health Care System and the Washington DC VA Medical Center (VAMC). The Washington DC VAMC and the Baltimore VAMC are both located in large urban areas and have significant enrollment, which is projected to increase significantly over the next 20 years. Both facilities are highly developed, complex medical institutions that serve separate and distinct, major metropolitan populations. Additionally, both facilities have numerous teaching affiliations and are major resources to medical education. Present capacity makes it impossible to absorb the other facility's workload without duplicating space, and neither site can accommodate the required space necessary to integrate the facilities. Although both facilities are within 35 miles of each other, population density and traffic patterns support maintaining both facilities.

Facility Level CARES Initiatives

Martinsburg Outpatient Planning Initiatives:

To address the projected workload and space demands, the following planning initiatives have been developed for the Martinsburg market area: Renovating 29,000 net square feet (NSF) of vacated domiciliary space for administrative functions and constructing a 31,000 NSF outpatient clinical addition will create enhanced outpatient clinic space. The 29,000 NSF of administrative services will move out of the hospital tower providing a total of 60,000 NSF of expansion space for primary care, mental health care, specialty

care and ancillary/diagnostic clinic space. Mental health outpatient services will be integrated with primary care at all locations. The plan also calls for expanding services in existing community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) to increase veteran access to primary care and mental health care services. A collaborative joint venture with the Department of the Army at Fort Detrick will expand outpatient clinic services and assist with improving access to VA care in Fredrick, Maryland. Selected high volume specialty care services would be offered in several strategically placed large CBOCs designed to improve patient access and divert workload away from the medical center: i.e., ophthalmology, oncology, podiatry, urology and orthopedics. Specialty care services may be offered through sharing agreements with joint venture partners, or by contracting with community providers when recruitment is problematic.

Martinsburg Inpatient Planning Initiative:

In response to CARES Bed Days of Care (BDOC) data, a significant amount of Washington DC VAMC domiciliary demand is being accomplished at the Martinsburg VAMC. To address the demand for these services in the Washington market, an inpatient mental health realignment will be accomplished by shifting 77 domiciliary/care beds from the Martinsburg VAMC to the Washington DC VAMC. This realignment of beds helps to address the market-based demand in Washington, DC, while maintaining an efficient domiciliary program at the Martinsburg VAMC.

Baltimore Outpatient Planning Initiatives:

To plan for the space gaps at the Baltimore VAMC, space would be leased near the medical center. The existing primary care/mental health services would relocate to the leased space and the vacated space would be used to expand specialty care outpatient services. The plan calls for expanding services in existing CBOCs to increase primary care and mental health care services. A collaborative Department of Defense (DoD) partnership at Fort Meade will expand outpatient clinic services in Anne Arundel County. Selected high volume specialty care services would also be offered in several strategically placed large CBOCs designed to improve patient access and divert workload away from the medical center: i.e., specialty care (audiology, speech, optometry and podiatry). Specialty care services may be offered through sharing agreements with joint venture partners, or by contracting with community providers when recruitment is problematic.

Baltimore Inpatient Planning Initiatives:

In response to CARES Bed Days of Care (BDOC) data, a significant amount of Washington DC VAMC inpatient psychiatry treatment is being accomplished at the Perry Point VAMC. To address the demand for inpatient psychiatric services, an initiative was develop to realign 22 beds from the Perry Point VAMC to the Washington DC VAMC. Space at the Washington DC VAMC on Ward 3C will be renovated to accommodate two 25-bed wards by combining the 28 current psychiatry beds at the Washington DC VAMC with 22 inpatient psychiatry beds relocated from the Perry Point VAMC. In addition, the

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VAMHCS has incorporated renovations to improve inpatient psychiatry service spaces and to replace the antiquated Nursing Home Care Unit at the Perry Point VAMC.

Washington Outpatient Planning Initiatives:

To address the workload and space gap projections, the Washington DC VAMC is proposing the following plan to address their planning initiative needs: Construct a 155,000 square foot Outpatient Center to address primary care/mental health, specialty care and ancillary/diagnostic services. Increased multilevel parking will be included to accommodate the additional patient workload. Expand current CBOCs (Alexandria, VA; Greenbelt, MD; and Southeast Washington, DC) to accommodate increased workload in primary care/mental health services. A collaborative joint venture with the Department of the Army at Fort Belvoir will expand outpatient clinic service and assist with improving veteran access to VA care in Northern Virginia and Washington, DC. Washington will also add a fourth CBOC in southern Prince George's County. Selected high volume specialty care services would be offered in several strategically placed large CBOCs designed to improve patient access and divert workload away from the medical center: i.e., specialty care (audiology, eye, dermatology and podiatry). Specialty care services may be offered through sharing agreements with joint venture partners, or by contracting with community providers when recruitment is problematic.

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How can I obtain a complete copy of the draft Market Plans for VISN 5?

You can obtain a complete copy of the draft Market Plans for VISN 5 by visiting the CARES website at: <http://www.va.gov/cares/page.cfm?pg=36>. You will be able to download a compressed file of the draft Market Plans or you can view it as a PDF file online.

What happens next?

Starting in June 2003, the CARES Commission will begin holding hearings throughout the country to gain additional feedback from stakeholders about the draft National CARES Plan. The first CARES Commission Hearing will be held in VISN 5 on Thursday, June 12, 2003, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Turf Valley Conference Center. All stakeholders throughout VISN 5 may attend the hearing to listen to oral comments provided by various stakeholder groups to the CARES Commission about the draft National CARES Plan. VISN 5 staff members will be on hand before and after the hearing to answer questions and to assist stakeholders who wish to submit written comments about the draft National CARES Plan. There will be a shuttle bus available to take audience members to the Turf Valley Conference Center from the Baltimore, Martinsburg and Washington DC VA Medical Centers. To reserve your space on the shuttle or for additional information about the CARES Commission Hearing, please call the CARES Hotline for VISN 5 at 1-800-463-6295, ext. 7384. The Turf Valley Conference Center is located at 2700 Turf Valley Road in Ellicott City, Maryland. For directions, please contact Turf Valley at 1-888-833-8873 or visit their website at: <http://www.turfvalley.com/index2.html>.

What opportunity is there for stakeholders to have a say in CARES?

Throughout the CARES process, veterans, VA employees, unions, veterans service organizations, academic affiliates and elected officials will be involved through briefings and solicitation of comments. Comments may be provided by mail, e-mail, phone and town meetings. To provide input or obtain more information about the CARES planning process for the VA Capitol Health Care Network, please contact the VISN 5 CARES Hotline at 1-800-463-6295, ext. 7384 or send an e-mail to the VISN 5 CARES Help Desk at: VISN5CARESHelpDesk@med.va.gov. Please make sure to leave your name, phone number/address and your question/comment about the CARES planning process when contacting us. The VISN 5 CARES Planning Committee looks forward to hearing from you and will promptly respond to all of your questions and/or comments.

How can I get more information on CARES?

The VISN 5 CARES Update will be published at least monthly and more often if needed. CARES information is also available on the Network Internet Web site at: <http://www.va.gov/visn5/network/cares.htm>. Information about the CARES process is also available on the national CARES Web site at: <http://www.va.gov/CARES/>. You can also get additional information about the current phase of the CARES process from the CARES Commission Web Page at: <http://www.carescommission.va.gov>.